

FORT PECK TRIBES

Assiniboine & Sioux
Testimonial Support for Senate Bill 272

February 12, 2015

Dear Chairman and committee members:

The Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes Language and Culture Department strongly support Senator Windy Boy with Senate Bill 272:

"An act strengthening Montana's commitment in its educational goals to the preservation of American Indian Cultural Integrity as stated in Article X, Section 1, of the Montana Constitution; encouraging school districts to create Indian Language Immersion Schools and programs; providing funding; including American Indian Language and Culture Specialists in the quality educator payment; amending section 20-9-327."

This legislative bill's findings support Fort Peck Tribes Language and Culture Department efforts: *"Preserving Indian cultural integrity and the purpose of [sections 1 through 4] is to promote innovative, culturally relevant, Indian language immersion programs for Indian and non-Indian students with the goal of raising student achievement, strengthening families, and preserving and perpetuating Indian language and culture throughout Indian country and Montana."*

Our strong support for this bill comes in a manner that gives opportunity to support our progressive cultural education goals. The Nakoda and Dakota Immersion environments provide complex and culturally based ways of teaching with emphasis on a holistic approach to: family, education, emotional, environmental, spiritual, cultural, health and societal issues.

This bill will help students continue life as a proud, dignified, and strong member just as their ancestors were. We recommend Native Language to be taken more serious by all and continue to stand up and strive to encourage language to be spoken in all settings as it is the carrier of our **cultures**. We owe it to our ancestors to stand up and speak the truth, to examine honestly events of our historical consciousness.

These American Indian cultural integrity teachings instill a sense of belonging and a role in society, both Native and Western. SB 272 has the strongest capability to help us Nakoda and Dakota people and all other Native Montanan students thru preserving and perpetuating Indian language and culture through Indian country and Montana.

Pinamaya/Pidamaya (Thank You!)

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